



# Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

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By Kevin Coates  
FWP Wildlife Biologist

## Big Game Check Stations

*Important tools for wildlife management*

Big game check stations are very important to FWP's wildlife management program. In fact, they provide some of the best information biologists use to manage our deer and elk herds.

Hunters should remember that they are required by law to stop at all designated big game check stations. There are seven check stations in R1 as well as mobile enforcement check stations.

The biological check stations in R1 are located at Canoe Gulch (Libby), Highway 2 West (Kalispell), Swan Valley (Ferndale), Thompson Falls, Olney, Hungry Horse, and North Fork of the Flathead River. Hunters have

**CHECKING OUT.**  
*FWP Wildlife Biologist Kevin Coates checks a young whitetail buck at the Swan Valley Check Station on opening day of the 2000 big game hunting season. Surveys show a growing young whitetail deer population in northwest Montana.*



cooperated well so far during the 2000 big game season. We always learn a lot by talking to hunters, and we look forward to it each year.

Biological check stations provide valuable data that allow us to better understand wildlife population trends (increasing, decreasing, or stable). Besides type, numbers, and location of game animals that are harvested, big game check stations provide biologists with a unique opportunity to study "animals-in-hand."

This information includes age specific growth measurements like antler length and jaw size, as well as health assessments and, where appropriate, body weight.

Stopping at check stations also gives you an opportunity to speak with the area wildlife biologist and ask about specific hunting and population conditions.

In the evening hours, traffic is heavy at check stations and hunters are in a hurry to get home. These busy periods may not be the best time to

visit, but please feel free to spend some time talking to us when the pace is slower.

While the check stations are for collecting biological data, wardens are often present and are sometimes available for discussions.

The vast majority of hunters who stop at check stations have followed the letter of the law and completed all of the required steps when harvesting game animals and later when trans-

porting their animals home for processing.

These requirements include validating your tag by cutting out the complete month and date that you harvested your animal and leaving evidence of sex naturally attached to the carcass. The latter can be somewhat confusing, especially when you have to quarter an animal to get it back to your vehicle.

In the case of quartered animals, you must leave part of the sex organs (Cont. on Page 2)

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# Big Game Check Stations

(Cont. from Page 1)

naturally attached to one of the rear quarters until the animal is processed or taken to the meat cutter. If you don't need to quarter the animal, the head is the best evidence of sex.

Common problems seen regarding tag validation include putting a single slice through the month or day rather than cutting out the entire triangle.

Also, be aware that all hunters must stop, not just those with game. This is because knowing how many hunters were afield and how many of them harvested elk or deer allows us to calculate and compare game harvest rates per hunter from year to year.

Last year we checked 22,236 hunters at R1 check stations. They had harvested 1,007 white-tailed deer, 222 mule deer and 73 elk. This doesn't represent the entire harvest in the region, which is estimated from telephone surveys after the season is over.

The combination of check station data, telephone survey data, and live animal survey data allow the biologists to construct population trend information for the species we manage for you, the hunter.

From these combined data sources, we know that white-tailed deer populations have grown at a rapid rate for the past 3 years, and on this basis we

will be recommending that the region go to either sex hunting for the first days in the 2001 license year.

So these are some of the reasons why it's important for you to stop at big game check stations. The bottom line is that check stations allow us to provide quality game management services to hunters.

FWP recognizes and applauds hunters, because we know you are the people who pay for wildlife conservation programs in Montana and across the nation. We look forward to seeing you at the check stations and offer you our best wishes for a happy and productive hunting season this fall.

## Young Hunters Take Nice Animals

The year 2000 is shaping up to be the year of the young hunter. Take a look at these fine animals bagged by

youngsters, each with a single shot.



**A RIGHT TO BE PROUD!** Kyle Upwall, 12, and his father, Mike, who live in Kalispell, are proud of Kyle's first deer. Kyle bagged the nice mule deer buck on opening day of the 2000 big game hunting season and checked it through the Highway 2 check station west of Kalispell.

"I wasn't too nervous," said Kyle. "We were up on a ridge and kicked out a number of deer. The does ran ahead but the buck stopped." Kyle and his dad dragged the deer one mile to the truck to finish their hunt.

Kyle's Hunter Education Instructor was Andy Breland. Another of Breland's students, Kerrie Dougherty, also took her first deer on opening day.

**SINGLE SHOT.** Assistant Hunter and Bowhunter Education Instructor Jeremy Plummer, 16, of Kalispell bagged this nice antelope buck near Townsend. Jeremy took the buck with a single arrow. Jeremy has been an assistant Hunter Education Instructor since 1997.



**FIRST DEER.** Chris Cardini, 13, of Columbia Falls, and biologist John Vore stand by Chris's first deer at the Highway 2 Check Station on opening day. Chris took the nice white-tail buck with a 40-yard shot.



**A HUNTING FAMILY.** Shannon, Katie, and Travis Vincent of Bigfork surround Shannon's nice mule deer buck taken opening day in the Bear's Paw Mountains. The girls each got an antelope and a mule deer on the hunt. Travis, 11, has one more year to wait.

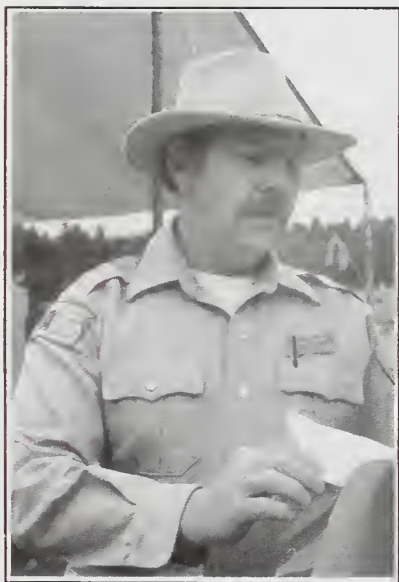


## Atkinson Honored by Harrington and Richardson Company

Instructor Dan Atkinson, the Region's shooting center operator, volunteer fundraiser and trainer, was recently honored by Harrington and Richardson Firearms Company as the outstanding instructor of the year.

Atkinson is known for his enthusiasm and organizational skills. He helped build the Hunter Education field course to one of the finest in the nation, and participated in writing Montana's Hunter Education Manual.

For Dan, hunter education is a family tradition. Dan's son, Christopher, and Daughter, Serena, served as assistant instructors and full instructors in the program. 🦋



## Judy Sommers Awarded Winchester International Hunter Education Recognition

Each year Winchester Ammunition chooses the outstanding International Hunter Education Instructor from a field of thousands of instructor applicants. This award is then presented to the recipient and the top four



**ACCEPTING THE AWARD** for the Outstanding International Hunter Education Instructor is Region 1 Instructor Judy Sommers (second from left). The award was presented by Winchester Ammunition.

finalists at the International Hunter Education Association Conference. The conference in the year 2000 was held in Regina, Saskatchewan.

The 1999 nominee for the State of Montana was Judy Sommers. Judy has been a hunter education instructor for five years and she has been an active participant in the program during that time.

Judy was nominated for her outstanding interactive teaching abilities and for her mentoring abilities with the students, in and out of the classroom. During her tenure with the program Judy has adamantly promoted

interactive teaching (not lecturing), and she demonstrates this in her classroom each session by using a number of innovative tools such as games, slide shows and student teaching.

If she finds students who aren't actively participating, she gives them jobs to help them become more involved without pressuring them. As you watch Judy's class you may find students sitting on the floor, separated into groups, out in the hallway crossing through a fence with a firearm, or listening to one of the parents teach a portion of the class on archery, black powder, ballistics, or who knows what.

Judy is also the team leader on the Confidence Course portion of the Field Course day. She has taken the Confidence Course and made it more of an observation course rather than a teaching course. She feels that it is the students' chance to show the instructors what they have learned in the classroom, and whether they can act responsibly with a firearm and make responsible decisions regarding animal identification, dealing with landowners, tag validation, and dealing with other hunters.

The best tribute that can be given to any instructor is the thanks and praise from the students and the parents. Each session Judy's class is one of the first ones to fill up just from the number of parents and students asking to be in her class. Judy has donated hundreds of hours to Hunter Education in the classroom and to fund raising in order to make the course that much better. 🦋

## Flathead Electric Co-op Helps Hunter Education Program

Hunter Education Instructor Dan Atkinson reports that Flathead Electric Cooperative has made a generous donation to northwest Montana's Hunter Education Program. Mike Radel and Steve Beck of the Cooperative arranged for the donation of

\$10,000 dollars through the Cooperative's Roundup For Safety Program, in which dollars earmarked for safety are returned to the community.

Of the donation, half will go towards buying hunter orange vests for

graduates of the Hunter Education Program, and half will go towards operation of FWP's Hunter Education mobile shooting center. The money will be used within the area served by Flathead Electric Cooperative. 🦋



# Popularity of Youth Angling

FWP's Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs (HOF) program offers youngsters positive activities focused on learning about the aquatic environment. Part of FWP's Family Fishing Initiative, the program involves mostly fourth grade students and their teachers in a year-long partnership with instructors from FWP.

In northwest Montana, about 80 classrooms with 1,700 students, take part in this fun program.

One of the most popular fishing spots for students in the program is Snappy's Sport Senter Pond. This pond, constructed by owner B. J. Lupton, is stocked with trout by FWP and others. Students in the program can fish in the pond with their classmates and view trout and trout habitat through a glass window below ground level.

In this program, students enjoy many other fishing spots across the region. Most are stocked through FWP's urban fishing initiative. Others are favorite local fishing holes.



**THAT'S A GREAT FISH!** Recently, HOF Instructor John Cloninger took Elrod students in Toni Gunnerson's second grade class to Snappy's pond. Here, Toni, John, and students Michael Crozier, Kateland Baker, and Mia Zacharias are impressed with Michael's big rainbow trout.

**CATCH OF THE DAY.** At a general fishing day at Snappy's, this 4-pound rainbow trout was the biggest of the day.



**FIELD TRIP FUN.** Students of Salmon Prairie School (below) viewed bull trout spawning nests and caught cutthroat trout at a lake near Condon on a HOF field trip in late October.





# Programs Continues to Grow




**FISHING AT SNAPPY'S.** Parents and kids are thrilled to have a fishing pond in the middle of town.

## Special Friends Fishing Day

The FWP Crossing the Barriers Committee in northwest Montana held a special fishing activity for the Special Friends/Kids in Motion picnic at Woodland Park in Kalispell. Kids with disabilities and their brothers and sisters caught rainbow trout stocked in

tanks by biologists from FWP's fish hatchery in Arlee.

This annual event was noticed outside the Flathead. The Los Angeles Lakers donated an autographed t-shirt worn by Shaquille O'Neil to a lucky drawing winner. Ben Tanberg of Lakeside was thrilled to win the shirt. 

**HAPPY KIDS** (right and below) catch fish at the Special Friends/Kids in Motion picnic.



**THE WINNER!** Ben Tanberg of Lakeside (center below) won an autographed T-shirt from Shaquille O'Neil donated for the event.



# Trapping Season Offers Outdoor Experiences

The trapping season for muskrat, mink, beaver, and otter opens



**GETTING AN EDUCATION.** Trapping is an educational and exciting experience for youngsters. Ermine (weasel) pelts are popular with craft makers.

November 1 across Montana. Not far behind, marten, wolverine and bobcat seasons open December 1.

Region One Wildlife Manager Jim Williams noted that trapping is a traditional family activity.

"Taking a youngster out on a trapline is a wonderful outdoor learning experience," he said. "In Region 1, where snow lasts all winter, trapping high mountain furbearers such as ermine (weasel) and marten provides an opportunity for kids to spend family time outside while learning the habits of these secretive animals."

Williams noted that trapping is one of Montana's most time-honored traditions. He said that beaver, muskrat, ermine and marten make up the bulk of the annual trappers' catch in northwest Montana.

Fur handling is also an important part of trapping. Furs which are handled properly bring the greatest value for sale, crafts, or as mementoes.

"Based on experience with my own two children, kids really enjoy the tanned pelts and the memories that go with them," Williams said.

## Trapping Licenses

The following licenses are available at Fish, Wildlife & Parks offices in Kalispell, Missoula, Bozeman, Great Falls, Billings, Glasgow, Miles City and Helena. They are also available at Butte, Lewistown and Havre resource area offices.

**Conservation (required prerequisite)** - \$4 Resident and \$5 Nonresident.

**General Trapper** - \$20; available only to resident conservation license holders 13 years of age or older.

**Youth Trapper** - \$3; available only to resident conservation license holders 6 through 12 years of age. Valid for mink and muskrat.

**Landowner Trapper** - \$1; applicant must give legal description of land owned or leased, name, address and resident conservation license number.

**Nonresident Trapper** - \$250 available only to nonresident conservation license holders 13 years of age or older, whose state of residence has nonresident trapper licenses available to Montana trappers. Valid for predatory animals and nongame wildlife. Season Dates: October 16 - April 15.

**Fur Dealer** - \$10 resident; \$10 Agent; \$50 Nonresident

**BOBCAT AND WOLVERINE LICENSE REQUIREMENTS** - Bobcat and wolverine may be taken only by resident trappers or hunters that purchase a trapper license prior to December 1.

**LICENSE REQUIREMENT Exemptions** - A license is not required for resident trappers/hunters or nonresident hunters to take predatory animals and nongame wildlife.



### What Makes a Good Hunter

- Hunting is a total experience made up of many things. A good hunter enjoys the total experience.
- Hunting is not a competitive sport. It is more serious. A good hunter realizes this.
- Different hunters have different attitudes about hunting success.
- A good hunter never stops learning.
- A good hunter goes hunting with a good sense of ethics.
- A good hunter is responsible for his or her actions.
- A good hunter has respect for the land, firearms, wildlife, other people, and the law.
- Good hunters enjoy the hunting experience only when they know that everything was done right.



## New Boating Rules Adopted

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks thanks members of the Region One Citizen Advisory Committee and all the people who helped formulate new boating rules for lakes in western Montana.

Conflicts between motorized boaters and other recreationists has increased significantly over the last decade. As a result, FWP and the FWP Commission asked the public to develop ways to reduce conflicts. The rules were shaped from a number of open houses, hearings, and comments.

FWP's Supervisor Dan Vincent noted that the public process was one of the most extensive the agency has conducted. "No set of rules is perfect, and both sides had to compromise some," he said. "But public comment assured us that these simple rules should greatly reduce conflicts on our waters without significantly affecting most boaters."

The new rules, which take effect May 15, 2001, are as follows:

•**No-Wake Distance From Shore:** The rule states that all watercraft must maintain no-wake speeds within 200 feet of the shoreline on lakes greater than 35 acres.



•**No-Wake on Lakes Less Than 35 acres:** The rule states that all watercraft must maintain no-wake speeds on all lakes 35 acres or less.

These rules will apply to all public lakes and reservoirs (any lake with legal public access) and to all lakes surrounded by Plum Creek Timber Company lands in western Montana (FWP Regions 1 and 2).

Exceptions:

(1) personal watercraft which must maintain a certain minimum operating speed to stay upright, and motorized watercraft towing a water skier from or to a dock or the shore. Both must travel the most direct route through the no-wake zone, and

(2) lakes greater than 35 acres located within the Thompson Chain of Lakes. These lakes are excluded from the rule on no-wake speeds within 200 feet from shore because wake restrictions on these lakes were set earlier by the Commission.

These simple rules will go a long way towards reducing conflicts on our lakes. Thanks again!

These simple rules will go a long way towards reducing conflicts on our lakes. Thanks again!

## Warden Mike Quinn Named Shikar-Safari Club Officer of the Year

FWP Warden Mike Quinn, a 27-year veteran, received the prestigious Shikar-Safari Club International's "Montana Wildlife Officer of the Year Award."

Quinn was recognized by FWP Director Patrick Graham for his exceptional skills investigating and solving wildlife crimes, his work ethic, commitment to the community he serves, and his dedication to the wildlife he's charged with protecting.

Warden Captain Ed Kelly called Quinn a "superb, well-rounded warden" who shares his wealth of experience with other wardens for the improvement of enforcement across the region.

The Shikar-Safari Award has been presented to a Montana game warden each year since 1969.



**WARDEN MIKE QUINN** is at home patrolling the back country or front country. He received this year's prestigious Shikar-Safari Club award for his accomplishments.

## Take a Kid Fishing!

# Good Places for Kids to Fish

By Jim Vashro

Region 1 Fisheries Manager

If you are taking kids fishing, focus on short trips and have other things to do when their attention wanders. Throw rocks, look under rocks, watch the clouds. Take snacks and a change of clothes (they will get wet and/or muddy). Try to go when the weather's nice and fish are biting. There's a kind of fishing for everyone. Build memories and a love for fishing. Have fun!

**Smith Lake** Contains yellow perch, some pumpkinseeds, northern pike, and trout. In winter, fish a plain hook, a glo-hook or a jig in chartreuse (yellow-green). Bait the hook with maggots (ew-w-w) or a perch eyeball (gross!). Lower it to the bottom and reel it up one turn of the reel handle. Jig it occasionally and use a bobber if you want. First and last ice is the best fishing—be careful.

**McWhorter's Pond** Go west of Kalispell on Highway 2 and turn right at Batavia School. From Highway 2 you'll turn left, right and left at each of the next intersections. After you drive next up a hill and under a big electrical transmission wire, you'll see the pond below the road in a field. Park off the road and walk down to the pond. The pond is private, but McWhorters will let you fish. It contains cutthroat trout.

Stillfish with a worm and marshmallow or fish a worm or salmon eggs below a bobber. Small spinners and flies will also work. This can be good ice fishing.

**Lion Lake Turn** at Hungry Horse and drive about 3 miles toward Hungry Horse Dam. Lion contains both rainbow and cutthroat trout. In summer and fall stillfish with worms and marshmallows or with flies and lures. In winter, fish a glo-hook with maggots or corn. Fish 10-20 feet below the ice.

**Echo Lake** Fish off the causeway or at the State Lands access in May-June and September-October or through the ice for lots of perch, bass, and small pumpkinseeds. Use a small hook or jig with maggots, worms, or a piece of fish under a bobber.

**Foys Lake** Drive 3 miles south of Kalispell on Foys Lake Road. Fish below the guardrail where you first get to the lake or near the County boat ramp. Good fishing for rainbows in spring, fall, and early winter. Fish worms and marshmallows or PowerBait on the bottom or under a bobber.


**Buffalo Head Pond** Turn on Grandview Drive just south of the Flathead Valley Community College. Just



**TWO YOUNG ANGLERS** enjoy a day at *Buffalo Head ponds*, one of FWP's urban fishing spots.

after the road makes a 90 degree turn south, park in the church parking lot near the gully. Walk down the gully under the road and to the ponds. This is a city park stocked with cutthroat trout. Fish with worms and marshmallows, flies, or small spinners.

**Dry Bridge Slough Turn** off Woodland Avenue in Kalispell about 8 blocks south of the Conrad Mansion onto 11th Street East and park in the cul-de-sac (this is the gully where kids sled in winter). This is a city park and the pond is stocked with rainbow trout.

Best bait is worms or PowerBait under a bobber (bottom is weedy). Flies and spinners may also work. Best fishing is in April/May and September/October. 

INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One



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